

SPANISH

Paper 9781/01
Speaking

Key Comments

Candidates should:

- present their introduction “naturally”, even if pre-learnt
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic
- provide evidence of research
- show interest in and personal engagement with the topic
- support opinions with evidence
- avoid sweeping statements.

Candidates should also expect to:

- be interrupted
- be asked to support statements
- be asked unexpected questions
- be asked about the sub-headings in a different order from that provided in the form
- give examples
- be stretched linguistically to their ceiling.

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish was high. The majority of candidates were able to maintain a conversation in fairly accurate and fluent language. There were, however, some recurring mistakes, listed later in this report.

Before the first part of the test (newspaper article discussion), many candidates used their preparation time very well, taking time to consider the issue in question and other points that might arise in conversation. Others did not seem to have spent enough time thinking about the general theme, though they had carefully studied the article and prepared a good summary.

Most candidates were able to sustain an interesting discussion and use the language of argument well. The Examiners asked candidates to express opinions and to substantiate, elaborate, clarify or qualify them. Many of the performances were highly satisfactory and some were excellent.

For the second part of the test (prepared topic discussion), most candidates had prepared their topics very thoroughly. Examiners found evidence of detailed research using different sources, and rewarded candidates highly for the quality of their research. When detailed and extensive factual knowledge was combined with clear analysis and well-founded opinion, candidates achieved much higher marks.

There were a small number of under-prepared presentations, where the candidates appeared to have only vague knowledge of some crucial aspects of their topic. This is surprising, given that gathering (and remembering) sufficient information is a straightforward way of gaining marks in this part of the test. A few presentations overlooked some quite significant aspects of their topics in their choice of sub-headings.

The discussions mostly flowed naturally without the candidates giving the impression of simply reciting pre-learnt material. They tended to respond readily to the Examiners' questions with appropriate replies. Not only that, but most did not appear taken aback by unexpected questions and tackled them confidently and honestly. Candidates were generously rewarded for their ability to engage in a natural and spontaneous conversation.

Most candidates also displayed an excellent ability to keep calm and collected or, at least, not to allow nerves to interfere significantly with their performance.

Comments on specific questions

Section A (Newspaper Article Discussion)

This could be the most challenging part of the test, as the candidates need to choose one of four newspaper articles, never seen before, and take twenty minutes to prepare it: read it through and understand it, make a note of their reaction and opinions on it, and think about which issues might arise from the topic presented in the article. They should also consider the general heading on the card and give some thought to possible areas of discussion.

The bulk of this part of the test is by nature unpredictable. After one minute's summary of the article and 3 or 4 minutes' talking about their opinions on it, the conversation broadens according to the general heading on the card. The headings this year were: *Sport* (efecto del éxito de la selección española de fútbol), *Law and Order* (lucha contra la pena de muerte), *Food and Drink* (Coca Cola y McDonald's en Bolivia), and *Contemporary Aspects of Spain* (Eurovegas en Madrid).

The first and third, *Sport* and *Food and Drink*, proved by far the most popular, and candidates had plenty to say on each, with views being generally well-supported. When discussing the Bolivia card, a significant number of candidates appeared to think that both Mc Donald's and Coca Cola had been expelled from the country, whereas only the second company had suffered this fate, the first having abandoned the Bolivian market due to a lack of commercial success. The second card, *Law and Order*, was chosen by a fair number of candidates, most of whom had strong views on the subject and spoke thoughtfully about it. The fourth card, *Contemporary Spain*, was chosen by only a few candidates. Some tackled it very well because they had a strong personal interest or connection with Spain. Others discussed the issues presented in the article very confidently but appeared less knowledgeable about other matters of current debate in Spain.

Candidates were naturally more nervous during this part of the test, but this did not result in significantly poorer performances than in the second part. In some cases, candidates rose admirably to the challenge and relaxed into a spontaneous and natural exchange with the Examiner. Occasionally, the conversation felt so "real" as to make it possible to forget, momentarily, that it was an exam. Having to improvise did challenge some of the candidates, but a high proportion of them fared just as well in **Section A** as in **Section B**.

A minority of weaker candidates found it hard to support their views with arguments after an initial yes/no answer, and were not able to respond well to why/how questions. They took refuge in simple statements and repetitive ideas. The very best candidates played an active role in the conversation and even introduced new topics themselves. Between these two extremes, the majority of performances showed good discussion skills and considerable resourcefulness.

Section B (Prepared Topic Discussion)

Most topics were well-suited to an 8-10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow, or else fairly large topics approached in an intelligently selective way. So for example, if the candidate was talking about a long historical period, the presentation worked best when it clearly concentrated on particular aspects of that period, while perhaps touching more lightly on other points.

Some candidates could clearly have carried on talking about their topic for another 10 minutes, as they had done plenty of research and reflection on it. Candidates should not worry if they feel they have not managed to say all they know about their topic at the end of the test, as it is not always possible to cover all the aspects that they have prepared.

The topics covered a very wide variety of areas, including History and Politics, Literature and the Arts, Popular Culture, Science, Sport, Food and Drink, Language, Philosophy and Ethics. Some were of great topical interest, like doping in Spanish sport or the debate about Catalan independence.

We had some of the more familiar topics, for example Che Guevara, Picasso's Guernica or Real Madrid and Barça, but many candidates had chosen to approach them in an original or personal way. The best candidates went beyond the purely descriptive in order to provide some analysis or personal view, supporting their insights convincingly.

Many presentations led to excellent conversations when an element of controversy or debate was introduced. The contentious aspect could be implicit in the title, or else included in one of the sub-headings.

There were also some highly original or unusual topics, for example about the Basque children sent to Britain in the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish firm Zara and the representation of Chile's dictatorship in Dorfman's play *La muerte y la doncella*.

Quality of language

The following common errors were noted by Examiners, and future candidates would be well advised to concentrate on accuracy in these areas:

Pronunciation

This was good overall and did not impair communication on the whole. Areas for improvement included:

- Pronunciation of *u* in words like *ataque, conquista guerra, seguir*.
- Pronunciation of *aceptar* as *acceptar*.
- Anglicized initial vowels in words like *unidad, Europa, usar*.
- Soft *g* in words like *religión, ideología, legislar*.
- Voiced *s* in words like *decisión, desastre, represión*.
- Stressing the wrong syllable or vowel: *democracía, economía, país, bombardeos, difícil*.
- Aspirated *h*: *hombre, hablar, ahorro*.

It is advisable for candidates to put particular care into learning the pronunciation of words and names directly related to the topic they are presenting.

Grammar

- Gender and number agreements between noun and adjective.
- Wrong gender. Words like *problema, tema, país, situación and solución* suffered more than others.
- Confusion between *ser/estar/haber*.
- Conjugation: missed subjunctives, preterite for imperfect, wrong person ending, radical changes in wrong tense (*empezó*).
- Use of *gustar*.
- Confusion between certain pairs of words: *nada/ningún, este/esto, bueno/bien, para/por, pero/sino, muerte/muerto*.
- Omission of *s* in the hundreds: **noveciento, *cuatrociento*.
- Use of cardinal instead of ordinal for kings and queens: *Carlos *tres, Fernando *ocho* instead of *tercero, octavo*.
- Adjective endings: *violente, ridículo*.
- Omission of the preposition *a* in front of personal direct complements: **afectan la gente*

Vocabulary

Some pairs of words were confused:

- *Policía/política*
- *Tiempo/hora*
- *Derecho/derecha*
- *Nombre/número*

Invented words, modelled on English, were also used: *resultado, demostraciones, involucados*.

Las personas was often heard in place of the more idiomatic *la gente*.

Candidates with a more sophisticated and specific vocabulary achieved higher marks in Range and Accuracy than those using the more general and common words, for example *llevar a cabo/realizar actividades nocivas/perjudiciales* against *hacer cosas malas*.

SPANISH

Paper 9781/02

Reading and Listening

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the Examiner in unambiguous language.

General Comments

This is the fifth year of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish Principal examination. This report will look at candidates' performance in this session, but will also concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations.

This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish-language skills in Reading and Listening. Candidates have 2 hours 15 minutes to complete the paper. They are advised to spend 1 hour 15 minutes on the Reading exercises and 1 hour on the Listening exercises. They may choose the order in which they prefer to tackle the exercises.

Part I – Reading (30 marks)

There are two passages with a combined limit of 600 words. The first one has reading comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish. Although these answers are not assessed for quality of language, candidates must not “lift” phrases from the passage. The second passage has questions in English that require answers in English. The third exercise is a retranslation from English into Spanish of a paragraph of about 75 words based on the stimulus of the earlier second reading passage.

Reading Text 1 was a passage about Pedro Alonso, a Spanish doctor involved in the search for a vaccine against malaria. The text is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. It is important for candidates to use their own words. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word.

For **Question 1** candidates were asked to name the Spanish region that Dr. Alonso comes from. Most identified *Asturias* but some gave unusual spellings that were closer to *Austria*. Most candidates gave the correct answer for **Question 2**, although a few wrote *el nombre* as a synonym for *el número*. There were two marks available for **Question 3**, but some candidates failed to gain the second mark because they omitted *tres dosis de la vacuna*. Full information is always required in this type of exercise. **Question 4** caused more difficulty, as candidates had to explain in their own words in Spanish the meaning of the phrase *un hito crítico*. Some thought that it referred to critics of the programme. Most candidates gained the two marks available for **Question 5**, whilst answers to **Question 6** showed that some candidates were unaware of a difference between *ser lista* and *estar lista*. Generally, in this paper it was clear that weaker candidates sometimes confused the general usage of *ser*, *estar* and *haber*. Finally, **Questions 7- 8** were answered well by most candidates. This type of exercise can be demanding in places, but overall the Examiners found that the majority of candidates displayed a good understanding of the Spanish material and were able to write their answers with an appropriate standard of Spanish language.

Reading Text 2 was about the new airport built in Castellón. The material was generally understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. Many candidates scored high marks on this exercise. Most candidates started well by

gaining the mark available for **Question 9** but **Question 10** caused more difficulty. In the text the *plaga de conejos* meant that there were many rabbits there, not that the rabbits had a disease. **Question 11** required an answer explaining why the runway had to be rebuilt. It was not because of the rabbits but because the runway did not meet/adhere to the necessary requirements. Unfortunately, the Spanish verb *no se ajusta a* led some candidates to write “needed adjustments”, whilst others thought that *las medidas exigidas* referred to the “required measurements” rather than to “the necessary requirements”. There were two elements needed to answer **Question 12**. Firstly it was essential to refer to “public money” and secondly, to “a laughing stock”. Many candidates succeeded in gaining these two marks. Whilst most candidates gained the mark for **Question 13**, they encountered more difficulty with **Question 14**. The expression *otra vuelta de la tuerca* was difficult for some, but it was not essential to understand this to be awarded the mark, because the mark scheme allowed an alternative answer in “a symbol of the waste that has sunk Spain into recession”. **Question 15** asked candidates to explain the meaning of the phrase *el boom del ladrillo*, which was explained in the text. A surprising number of candidates confused *ladrillo* with *ladrón* and wrote about the “corrupt thieves”. Whilst **Question 16** was generally answered well, the word *beneficios* in **Question 17** caused some problems. The word can mean “benefits” in English, but in the context of this text it clearly meant “profits”.

Reading Text 3 was a paragraph in English based on the material in **Reading Text 2**. Candidates had to translate this into Spanish. The previous text contained words and phrases that could help them, but generally some manipulation of language was required. For marking purposes, the text is divided into 30 boxes and these are each awarded one mark or zero. The total score is converted to a final mark out of 10. The correct information should be communicated and suitable and accurate alternative renderings are accepted. Slight spelling errors are disregarded, but not if the meaning of the word is altered. The final mark scheme document gives a detailed list of versions that were accepted or not.

Most candidates performed well in this exercise and there were some pleasing translations. Although slight errors are permitted, the Examiners point to several common errors. These include anglicised spellings (*iniciativas*), missed subjunctives (*sólo se puede esperar que se encuentre una solución*), inability to form a complete negative phrase (*ningún avión jamás ha aterrizado*), confusing basic words (*muchos, varios, tantos, pocos*), not knowing how to form and use *cuyos* and not putting the correct verb form after *seguir* (*los periodistas siguen bromeando*). A surprising number of candidates failed to use the vocabulary help given in Reading passage 2. For example, the text had the expression *la pista de despegue y aterrizaje* but many candidates failed to convert this correctly to *ha aterrizado o despegado* for the translation, using instead the verbs *salir* and *llegar*. Finally, candidates are advised to check through their translation to make sure that every word has been covered. Many missed little words such as *allí* and *pronto* and a few candidates even missed whole phrases or sentences.

Part II - Listening (30 marks)

Candidates have control of their own individual listening equipment. They may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point. There are three passages with a combined limit of 700 to 800 words. The first has listening comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish, whereas questions for the second passage are in English and require answers in English. Answers in the target language are not assessed for quality of language but for communication. Candidates then listen to a third recording of about 250 words and summarise it in English using bullet points for guidance (maximum of 100 words).

The extract for **Listening Text 1** was an interview with Irene Villa, a young Spanish woman who was the victim of a terrorist attack by ETA when she was 12 years old. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. It is important for candidates to use their own words. Vocabulary items need to be understood but they should be conveyed in an answer that is a logical response to the question. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word. It would appear that candidates understood the material well and produced sound responses. Many candidates scored highly in this exercise and no specific question caused particular difficulty. Errors included using the present tense to answer **Question 19**, stating that ETA killed in the attack on Irene and her mother for **Question 20**, not knowing the difference between *no sabía quien era Irene* and *no conocía a Irene* for **Question 22** and confusion between the *le* and *se* pronouns when answering **Question 23**. Finally, some candidates failed to understand the correct information to answer **Question 25**. Although there was a reference in the text to criminals rotting in jail, Irene’s main wish in achieving justice is as a deterrent to prevent others from killing in the future. Overall, however, most candidates scored highly in this exercise.

In **Listening Text 2** candidates heard a news report about bullfighting on Spanish television. Candidates appeared to understand the material well and produced some good, thoughtful answers. Occasionally, however, rather than weak comprehension of the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly. Most candidates gave the correct information for **Question 26**, but there were more errors in **Question 27**. It was necessary to include “protecting children” but some candidates made a reference to the “watershed” incorrectly, thus contradicting the correct answer. There was also an amount of confusion about *media tarde*, believing it to be “midday”. Whilst most candidates succeeded in gaining the two marks available for **Question 28**, some failed to mention “Spanish bullfighting fans”. **Question 29** was answered well by most candidates but some lost the mark for **Question 30** by stating that “they tried to ban bullfights in Cataluña”. This gives the impression that they tried but were not successful, which is not correct. The remaining two questions were usually understood and answered correctly.

Listening Text 3 involved an interview with Rosa Maestro, founder of *masola.org*, an organisation for women who have chosen to be single mothers. The test required a summary of his views in no more than 100 words in English. There were four bullet points of information to be covered. The full gist of the passage needs to be understood, there has to be detail and it needs to be well selected. The material should be expressed concisely, read well and be informative. The 10 marks available are awarded positively according to these criteria. Length is important. A summary with fewer than 80 words is likely to be self-penalising, as all the above criteria are unlikely to be met. On the other hand, candidates should beware of writing over-long summaries. It should be stressed that the Examiners operate a cut-off point and any material written beyond that point cannot be assessed, even if it is correct. Many candidates appeared to find the material accessible and there were some high marks awarded in this exercise. They appeared to be familiar with the vocabulary and concepts in the extract. The Examiners found that many candidates produced good summaries that demonstrated understanding of the gist and detail of the original Spanish extract. They were able to infer ideas and showed an ability to select key facts and to communicate this information concisely. Few candidates wrote in note form, only using isolated phrases that they had heard in the text without attempting to make sense of them in coherent statements. Although continuous English prose is not required to answer this test and bullet points are acceptable, they must contain enough information with logical links and coherent statements. Otherwise, the marks cannot be awarded. This year most candidates gave a suitable summary and gained good marks.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

What comprehension skills are required?

- The material for the texts may come from any of the Topic Areas in the Syllabus;
- the material could be factual or abstract;
- inference – you have to work out the answers;
- manipulation – you will be expected to manipulate the language;
- explanation – you will need to explain;
- synthesis – you may need to combine points of information;
- full information is always required – answers may be long;
- a high level of Quality of Language is expected – accuracy and sophistication are needed.

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given;
- highlight the question words (*¿quién?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿cuándo?*, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed;
- note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted;
- try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word for word;
- practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts;
- remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling;
- beware of “false friends” (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings);
- realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings; choose the correct one;
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word;
- make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it;
- make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information.

Retranslation for Reading Task 3

- Study the Spanish stimulus passage in Reading Task 2 carefully: it gives vocabulary and structures to be used and re-worked;
- read the English passage and understand what is required;
- study the setting, context and tone of the extracts;
- use sensible and intelligent guesses where vocabulary is not known;
- never leave gaps;
- think carefully about the grammar of the sentence being translated; Examiners regularly point to the failure of candidates to translate tenses correctly, to spot adjectival agreements and to link pronouns with the nouns to which they refer;
- beware of literal translation and poor/meaningless Spanish;
- beware paraphrasing – do not stray too far away from the original;
- but, on the other hand, do not be afraid to change word order, parts of speech, etc;
- remember that accuracy is more important than creativity.

Summary skills for Listening Text 3

What are summary skills?

- all the bullet points have been covered
- the gist of the passage has been understood
- there is detail and it is well selected
- the material is expressed concisely
- the material reads well and is informative
- there is no incorrect information

Advice on summary skills

Writing a good summary is a matter of regular practice and also of acquiring the correct technique. An unsuccessful attempt at a summary may be due to lack of understanding of the original text, but more often than not, it is the way the exercise has been tackled that is at fault.

- Listen to the passage until you have a good idea of what the whole text is about;
- do not start summarising (or even translating) every sentence; you will not be discarding the less significant details and you will quickly run out of words;
- make rough notes on the question paper; you are not likely to have time to write out a full version of the summary and then write out a clean copy;
- it is often not necessary to know the meaning of every word – do not panic if you do not understand something;
- remember this is a summary – be selective – you cannot include every bit of information;
- make sure that you cover all the bullet points;
- spread the words: it is a common error to say too much about the first half of a passage and too little (or nothing at all) about the last parts;
- “prune” written summaries, removing unnecessary words without deleting the main points that you wish to convey;
- absolutely stick within the word limit – do not exceed 100 words;
- check the accuracy of everything you have written.

The Quality of your Spanish Language

- Remember that essential Spanish grammar knowledge is required; you should aim for responding in accurate language;

Cambridge Pre-U
9781 Spanish June 2014
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- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (eg. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);
- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (eg. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (eg. *trabajo* or *trabajó*? *esta*, *esta* or *ésta*?);
- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully.

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/03
Writing and Usage

Key messages

When choosing an essay title in **Part I**, candidates should:

- think carefully about the key words in each essay title
- consider whether they have an opinion on the subject that they are able to justify
- consider whether they possess the relevant topic-specific vocabulary to be able to express their ideas about the chosen topic.

When writing the essay, candidates are advised to:

- write an introduction, discussion and a conclusion
- ensure that their response is fully relevant
- write in paragraphs, making clear, relevant points in each one
- try to use a variety of language and demonstrate linguistic ability, without losing the thread of the argument.

General comments

This year's cohort seemed thoroughly prepared and, on the whole, rose well to the challenges posed by the examination.

Most candidates showed a very good grasp of the higher registers of the language, both in the essay and in the exercises which required some complex manipulation of language.

In **Part I**, some candidates wrote over-long essays in which the essay title did not always seem to have been clearly understood. Candidates should allow themselves time to plan the essay content, and to consider the issue in question and their own reactions to the ideas proposed in the essay titles. It is of the utmost importance that candidates have at their disposal the language needed to express opinions and justify them.

To perform well in **Part I**, candidates need to go beyond the purely descriptive and should express personal views. For this reason it is advisable to choose an essay on a subject about which the candidate has an opinion they can justify. It is also important to take a clear and consistent approach when answering the essay title. Those who performed well wrote with accuracy and sophistication, and showed a full understanding of the requirements of the exercise.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Discursive essay

Candidates are advised to write about 350-450 words in Spanish. Many candidates wrote in excess of 450 words, and this sometimes resulted in repetition of ideas and a loss of focus on the topic.

In general, the quality of candidates' responses to the questions was impressive, with most candidates able to understand the key issues and many able to offer sophisticated and coherent arguments. Linguistically, almost all candidates demonstrated the ability to write fluently and, to a large extent, accurately. Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the more advanced grammatical features of the language as well as with some idiomatic language.

It is important that candidates avoid underpinning arguments with incorrect statistics or other incorrect information. Similarly, sweeping generalisations and unsupported or unsubstantiated opinions can undermine the effectiveness of an argument.

- (a) Candidates displayed good understanding of the topic in a range of approaches to the question. Some considered the often unnoticed work that young people perform in charities and other organisations; others focused their answer more closely on their personal experiences.
- (b) This was the second most popular choice. Some candidates seemed to find the question quite challenging and did not show a full understanding of the essay title. Such candidates tended to focus too much on the internet part of the question, without addressing the rest. In stronger answers, candidates gave a considered account of how the information we receive has been manipulated and controlled, with some discussion as to how both the written press and the virtual world do so in different ways.
- (c) Fewer candidates chose this option. Those who did wrote credibly on the subject and developed their ideas well.
- (d) The best answers gave a considered account of how the media can influence the society we live in, and their duty in reporting gender violence. Some candidates studied the role of the press in the gender inequality which still exists in our society. Others focused their argument on the way the press manipulates headlines in order to sell newspapers, and went on to criticise the press. Other candidates focused on domestic violence.
- (e) This was the most popular question and generally candidates presented a balanced argument. There were some impressive performances which showed depth of argument and originality of approach. Some candidates concentrated on the benefits and disadvantages of immigration, whilst others discussed the problem of losing their identity. Approaches to this question varied and most candidates had a lot to say about the topic.

Part II: Usage

Exercise 1

Questions 2–6

Candidates coped well with this exercise. In general, the questions that candidates found more challenging were **Questions 4 and 5**, where the pluperfect indicative and subjunctive were tested. Some candidates also had difficulty with **Question 2**, which tested the present tense of a radical changing verb.

Exercise 2

Questions 7–11

This grammar exercise proved to be more demanding for some candidates in terms of the language manipulation needed.

In **Question 7**, many candidates had difficulty with the use of the correct relative pronoun *la que* or the use of *quien*.

Question 8 was the question that candidates found most challenging. Some candidates were able to understand that the use of the passive was needed *son bien acogidos*.

A number of candidates also seemed to find **Question 11** challenging, with the use of *al + infinitive*. Most candidates had difficulty with the correct position of the direct object pronoun with an infinitive: *probarla*.

Exercise 3

Questions 12–31

In general, candidates performed very well in this exercise and were able to choose the correct answer in most cases. Where candidates gave incorrect responses, it was most frequently in answer to **Questions 12, 13 and 21**.

SPANISH

Paper 9781/04
Topics and Texts

Key messages

To achieve high marks for content a focused, wholly relevant and analytical response to the question is required. Essays should keep to the recommended length of 350–500 words for **Part I** and 450–600 for **Part II**.

General comments

Overall the standard of responses this year was very good. A number of candidates showed impressive originality in their approach to the questions.

The very best essays gave a focused and analytical response to the question, describing not just how but why authors/directors develop the themes/features under consideration. Examples from the texts/films were invaluable, particularly when the candidate demonstrated that s/he understood how they related to the question. In the most focussed relevant essays candidates attempted to use conclusions appropriately to sum up their argument, without bringing in new material.

Weaker candidates did not focus on the terms of the question, but rather dwelt on issues with which they felt comfortable, generating text that may have been familiar to them but which strayed into irrelevance or narrative in the context of the essay question. Less successful answers used introductions to restate the question and announce the candidate's intention to answer it, rather than to make more significant headway in addressing the issues; weaker conclusions repeated introductions. Candidates are reminded that essays beyond the recommended length is not to their advantage.

In **Part I** candidates used adequate vocabulary which was accurate in simple structures but with variable success in more complex language; a high proportion of the language candidates used was good. Nearly all answers were comprehensible throughout. Only a few candidates included bulky pre-learned essay. Some typical language errors included confusion between *muerto/muerte*, *significa/significado/significativo* and *solo/único*. *Resultar en* and *audiencia* were misused, *un* often preceded *otro*, *intentar* gained a following preposition, *pesimista* was masculinised and *aceptar* misspelt.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Cultural Topics

Question 1

A and B

Candidates generally showed a good understanding of the requirements set by the questions and managed to organise their material convincingly. To varying degrees, candidates displayed knowledge of the historical setting of these works, using this to form the basis of the structure for their response. The use of language was generally very good and at times outstanding.

Question 2

A There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

B There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 3

The best essays displayed a good understanding of Almodóvar's use of genres and went on to explore the intensity and characteristic *hiperrealismo* of these films. There were a number of useful references made to critical commentaries or Almodóvar's own statements about his films – it is advisable that candidates specify where the remark was published (e.g. website, in an interview etc.).

- A** A clear understanding of terms like '*género*', '*tema*', and '*melodrama*' was useful in answering this question, including the point that '*géneros*' are not '*temas*'. Responses cited a number of specific scenes where genres are mixed, with accurate assessment of the resulting effect. Katerina's '*nada es sencillo*' was one of a number of well used quotations.
- B** It was acceptable to interpret this as a question about death and (separately) regeneration, or about death only in cases where it was linked to regeneration. This potentially complex theme was generally well handled, with the best answers explaining how the cases of death and regeneration in the films ran parallel to the modern history of Spain. The *Bella Durmiente* parallel to *Hable con ella* was well deployed, as was Katerina's quote in that film about life emerging from death. Those with more limited knowledge of the films struggled to identify how 'regeneration' featured in them, misinterpreting it to mean 'recovery' or 'resolution', or as what happens after death.

Question 4

- A** Candidates showed good understanding of the role of religion, greed (for natural resources) and class/caste/racial divisions as causes of oppression. Many of the essays demonstrated impressive engagement with the topics covered, with strong and coherent arguments made about the forces at work in Latin American society. Weaker candidates tended to overlook the importance of land ownership – a clear theme of *Diarios de Motocicleta* (which, together with *También la lluvia*, had been studied by all those answering this question). Some good points were mentioned by candidates who made referencies to E. Galeano's *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*.
- B** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 5

Candidates showed an impressive knowledge of the works, with many quoting extensively. Stronger candidates explored the role of fate (for example, the symbolic characters in *Bodas de Sangre*) and the historical context of the plays' composition, as Spain reached a point of cataclysmic confrontation between the forces of conservative repression and progression/anarchy. The better candidates looked at how the plays' symbolism enhanced the elements referred to in the essay titles.

All candidates referred to *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, and then divided roughly equally between those opting for *Bodas de Sangre* or *Yerma* as their second text. Some colourful language was attempted, with more than one candidate suggesting that the '*dramaturgia lorquiana*' was intended to '*darnos una lección magisterial*' – perhaps an unflattering reflection of the subtlety of these works.

- A** Many candidates endorsed the 'exclusively pessimistic' line in their introductions, but then retrospectively inserted '*casi*' and '*quizás*' to nuance their initial statements. Much was written about the repression of women or the trajectory of particular characters in the plays, though sometimes lacking any clear connection to the question. By contrast, references to '*destino*' were generally well connected to the title. The best answers on *Bodas de Sangre* included reference to the Moon and the Beggar as agents of fate, adding to the pessimism. The most successful candidates managed to contextualise their answer to make it more meaningful. The weaker candidates showed a more limited understanding of the historical setting in Spain at the time when Lorca would have written these works, which impeded a detailed analysis.
- B** There were not many responses to this question. Some candidates misinterpreted '*individualidad*' to mean 'unconventionality', and conversely regarded '*arquetipos*' as meaning representatives of social convention.

Part II: Texts

Question 6

- A** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- B** Laurencia was well analysed, and contrasted to male characters and to less virtuous women referred to in the play (though the implicit *force majeure* explanation of the latter's lesser virtue was not seldom acknowledged). The major omission was reference to the queen and her crucial role as a leader and restorer of stability. Candidates offered interesting opinions on the location of virtue within the play, and some disputed whether characterisation (as virtuous or otherwise) was an appropriate consideration in this genre. Many answers included impressive insights into the notion of old order versus new order, well linked to the discussion of virtue required by the essay title.
- C** Candidates needed to define the key terms of the question: illegitimate, necessary and harmony. Those who did so produced impressive analysis of Golden Age values as reflected in the play, including the nuances of concepts such as feudalism and absolute monarchy.

Question 7

- A** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- B** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- C** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 8

- A** Candidates offered some excellent textual analysis, showing thorough understanding of language and structure, the poet's thought processes, and the way this poem reflects recurring elements of the collection.
- B** This question attracted very few answers, which featured a mixture of well-focused comment but also digression. Not all quotes used were accurate.
- C** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 9

- A** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- B** Those answering on Borges exclusively favoured this question, with candidates drawing less on *El sur* and *El jardín* than on the other four stories. Stronger answers took into account the wording of the question and examined how and why Borges made death such a recurrent feature of his stories. Less successful answers tended to mention instances and circumstances of death in the stories rather than to analyse what these deaths tell us about Borges' vision of the world. References to justice and to labyrinths were often but not always helpful, depending on how well they were related to the question. Narrative perspective of *El encuentro* had not often been portrayed correctly. With the six short stories amounting to relatively little text, candidates should be particularly sure to avoid error over plot details.
- C** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 10

- A** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- B** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- C** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 11

There was a wide spread in candidate's performance, although all essays read well. Some candidates restricted themselves to fairly descriptive pieces, with some omissions. The best responses included detailed analysis of Mosén Millán's relationship with his parishioners as well as excellent descriptions of the role of the Catholic Church as portrayed by Ramón J. Sender.

Candidates answering all three questions benefited from appropriate reference to the *romance*.

- A** The best answers noticed the symbolism not only of the colt but also of the statues and the *torrente de luz*.
- B** The priest's lack of compassion was usually mentioned, but less so his lack of empathy for Paco and others. The clash between the villagers' fertility rites and Catholic austerity was mentioned in the stronger answers, as was Mosén Millán's discomfort over political developments at both national and local level.
- C** Perceptive answers commented on the omission of chapter breaks, the variety of narrative voices, the temporal flux of the text reflecting the chaos of war and the stasis of Mosén Millán during the narrative.

Question 12

A number of answers referred to such matters as the Colonel's journey, his innocence and/or his awakening. Sometimes there was a lack of evidence to explain or illustrate these terms. Some candidates wrote about the Colonel's 'passivity', but without clarifying why they interpreted his behaviour this way (others regarded the same conduct as stoicism, endurance or nobility).

References to García Márquez 'criticising Latin American society' or 'mocking' Don Sabas missed the subtlety of how García Márquez does not overtly mock or criticise, but rather allows his readers to draw their own conclusions. The '*mierda*' ending was interpreted in a number of ways: some candidates saw it as a compromise, but a more convincing interpretation was that it represented the Colonel's continuing defiance.

- A** Candidates were able to link this passage successfully to other themes in the novel. Misunderstandings of the text included the notion that the trumpets were blown by the military, that those in the bar ran away or that the narrator's comments are the Colonel's thoughts.
- B** Some candidates sensibly defined the key terms 'compromise' and 'fulfilment'. Many successfully linked the notion of compromise to the political situation (inviting evaluation of whether this is a political novel). Claims that the Colonel does not realise the regime is corrupt were hard to substantiate: so too were interpretations of 'fulfilment' as 'pride', or the notion that the Colonel and his wife were compromising by hiding their poverty. Successful arguments were made both that the Colonel survives by compromising and that his life represents a refusal to compromise.
- C** The more successful answers took into account that this question is about the portrayal of ill-health (physical and mental). Candidates focused on the Colonel, his wife and Don Sabas.

Question 13

- A** This passage was a popular choice for candidates, who found in it a clear illustration of the fundamental differences between Mario and *la tía* Julia right from the start of their romantic attachment, as well as the ironic tone that characterises the novel. The responses were well structured and paragraphs were clearly defined. Candidates managed to sustain their analysis for most of their essays although, at times, some candidates' work became a little too narrative or descriptive. The very best candidates managed to go beyond the more obvious analysis of Tia Julia's relationship with Mario to reflect on the more ironic aspects in the extract.
- B** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.
- C** There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.